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Excerpts from "In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great." 1997

"There are over 200 different Alexander epics and poems in medieval European languages alone, surviving in literally thousands of manuscripts; for example, in Russian, Polish, Old French, Czech and Serbian. In Jewish tradition, Alexander is nothing short of a folk hero. There is a medieval German Alexander epic, an Icelandic Alexander saga, and an Ethiopian Alexander romance. By the mid-fourteenth century, the tale had even reached Mongolia, where Alexander appears as an almost supernatural predecessor of Genghis Kahn. You can find him depicted as one of the four kings on the standard French pack of playing cards; you will find the map of his empire on every Greek school map, and every [restaurant] wall; he's on Sicilian carnival carts, Ethiopian bridal cloths, Byzantine church murals, and on paintings from Moghul India."

"During his conquest, Alexander founded nearly 30 cities names Alexandria in his honor... Alexandria, Egypt, one of the many towns that Alexander founded and named after himself, became a world - [famous] center of learning, and was the home of ... great scientists and mathematicians."

"The exact cause of Alexander's death has never been determined. He, of course, suffered greatly during his campaigns, enduring at least 21 wounds that, at one point, left his so [hurt] he could not speak above a whisper. In the last stretch of his campaign, his lung was punctured by what some say was a poisoned arrow."

Reprinted with permission from "In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great: A Journey from Greece to Asia", Michael Wood, University of California Press, c. 1997.